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REPORT OF THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS AND FOLLOW-UP TO THE WORLD CONFERENCE ON HUMAN RIGHTS

Report of the High Commissioner submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 48/141

Addendum

Tolerance and pluralism as indivisible elements in the promotion and protection of human rights

Introduction

1. In resolution 2000/50 the Commission on Human Rights called upon the High Commissioner and her Office to include details of activities undertaken to implement the resolution in her report to the Commission at its fifty-eighth session on this subject.

2. The present report covers activities undertaken by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in the two-year period since the resolution was adopted, with particular attention to educational initiatives and public-awareness activities that contributed to the promotion of tolerance and pluralism.

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Special initiatives in preparation for the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance

3. In her capacity as Secretary-General of the World Conference, and in the context of the preparations for the World Conference, the High Commissioner for Human Rights supported several initiatives that contributed to the promotion of diversity and tolerance. On 5 September 2000, during the Millennium Assembly, the Visionary Declaration, "Tolerance and Diversity: A Vision for the 21st Century" was launched by President Thabo Mbeki of South Africa. The Declaration was initiated by the High Commissioner and has former President Nelson Mandela as its patron. As of November 2001, 86 heads of State and 52 parliamentarians had signed the Declaration. Following a request by the High Commissioner, the Secretary-General of the Millennium World Peace Summit of Religious and Spiritual Leaders made a commitment on behalf of religious leaders to support the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination on 21 March 2001 and to participate actively in the World Conference and its follow-up. On 15 June 2001, the publication Sacred Rights: Faith Leaders on Tolerance and Respect, compiled by the Millennium World Peace Summit of Religious and Spiritual Leaders in cooperation with OHCHR, was launched at the Palais Wilson as a contribution to the goals of the World Conference.

4. On 26 March 2001, the Commission on Human Rights held the special debate of its fifty-seventh session on the theme "Tolerance and respect". With the World Conference in sight, the debate offered an opportunity to explore ways and means of promoting those principles. Distinguished panellists including Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Senator Aden Ridgeway, Sheik Sahib Ben Sheikh and Dr. Nafis Sadik, Member States and non-governmental organizations offered valuable contributions to the debate. A key theme was that tolerance and pluralism are crucial to social and economic dynamism and to the full achievement of human potential. In that respect, globalization is making it ever more important to promote common ethics and values based on respect for human dignity and worth. The debate further emphasized that tolerance and respect are values found in practically all religions in the world and religious teachings have been central in conveying the importance of human dignity. The role of education in combating fear of difference and in changing intolerant attitudes and behaviour was also emphasized, and it was stressed that a policy of inclusion rather than exclusion would contribute to building healthy societies based on respect for human rights.

Third Decade to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination and the World Conference

5. In accordance with Commission resolution 1998/26, the activities of the Programme of Action for the Third Decade were focused on the preparatory process for the World Conference and the Conference itself. A summary of these activities is provided below. The report of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly at its fifty-sixth session on the implementation of the Programme of Action (A/56/206) provides further details. The activities undertaken both during the preparatory process for the World Conference and the Conference itself succeeded in shedding light on the continuing scourges of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. The preparatory process and the Conference itself also succeeded in bringing States, individuals and organizations together to discuss and debate the issues, and to raise awareness about racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance.

6. Activities undertaken during the preparatory process for the World Conference included:

(a) **Meetings**. OHCHR, in cooperation with the regional commissions, convened five regional expert seminars in 2000 with the overarching theme "Trends, priorities and obstacles in combating racism and racial discrimination". The objectives of the seminars were, inter alia, to raise awareness and promote tolerance, to share information in the region on the issues of racism and intolerance, and to involve Governments, regional organizations, national institutions, NGOs and other civil society actors in the preparatory process;

(b) The NGO Liaison Unit of OHCHR coordinated NGO participation in the World Conference. The NGO Forum was held from 28 August to 1 September 2001 and brought together over 7,000 representatives of some 3,000 NGOs. Approximately 3,800 representatives of 777 NGOs took part in the World Conference itself;

(c) OHCHR funded and facilitated the International Youth Summit held on 26 and 27 August 2001. More than 700 youth from all regions of the world attended the Summit. During the Summit, the youth themselves established an international youth network in order to share information and experiences after Durban. On 4 September, they adopted a Declaration and Plan of Action, which was submitted to the plenary of the World Conference the following day;

(d) **Publications**. Several publications were produced and widely disseminated prior to and during the World Conference. Between December 2000 and October 2001, the World Conference secretariat published a series of six bimonthly newsletters that provided updates on preparatory events and substantive articles on topics relevant to the Conference and related issues. The newsletters, available in English, French and Spanish, were posted on the World Conference web site in order to reach as wide an audience as possible. OHCHR cooperated with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization in the preparation of a book entitled United to Combat Racism, which is a collection of articles on different aspects of racism and ways of combating it. The book also contains the texts of relevant international and regional instruments dealing with racial discrimination. A publication entitled Gender Dimensions of Racial Discrimination was also issued by OHCHR;

(e) **Media**. In preparation for the World Conference, OHCHR in cooperation with the Department of Public Information of the Secretariat, undertook a media campaign intended to raise worldwide awareness about the World Conference and its objectives. One successful initiative was the free concert organized by OHCHR in Geneva on 1 June 2001. Over 25,000 people attended the concert. A public service announcement to raise awareness about the World Conference was aired on a number of international television channels, including CNN and the French-language TV 5;

(f) **Promotional materials**. OHCHR, in cooperation with the Department of Public Information, prepared brochures and other promotional materials on the World Conference, some of which were distributed at the country level through the United Nations information centres. A poster illustrated by French artist Tomi Ungerer was also widely distributed;

(g) **Memorabilia**. To raise awareness about the Conference, the Office distributed information kits on the World Conference and cups, bags, hats and T-shirts with the World Conference logo, dates and place of the event;

(h) **Internet**. Between 24 August and 7 September 2001, statistics show that the OHCHR web site received 4,755,602 hits. During this period, the OHCHR home page was the World Conference page. This number was the highest ever recorded in the five-year history of OHCHR web site and showed the tremendous worldwide interest in the World Conference.

7. Activities undertaken during the Conference included:

(a) **Media**. Approximately 1,100 journalists were accredited to and covered the World Conference. Among them were several journalists invited on a special OHCHR fellowship from different regions of the world. Some events were covered live on television. Radio, television and print media carried interviews with some participants and helped to get the message of the Conference out. Other events sponsored by the OHCHR are summarized below;

(b) **Parallel events**. Some 40 parallel events took place during the World Conference. These events were organized by OHCHR, other organizations of the United Nations system, treaty bodies, national human rights institutions and NGOs. Some events were joint efforts.

(i) OHCHR organized the following events:

Round table - Indigenous media dialogue (1 September 2001);

Panel - Voices of indigenous women (4 September 2001);

Round table - Racism and indigenous Peoples (5 September 2001);

Symposium - Cooperation for the better protection of the rights of minorities (1-2, 5 September 2001);

Workshop - The intersectionality of gender and race discrimination (2 September 2001).

(ii) United Nations organizations organized the following events in cooperation with OHCHR:

Panel - The child's right to education (UNICEF and OHCHR, 4 September);

Panel - Diversity is everybody's business: implementing equality and diversity policies, private sector action (ILO and OHCHR, 4 September);

Panel - Exploring the link: HIV/AIDS, stigma, discrimination and racism (UNAIDS and OHCHR, 5 September);

Round table - Racism and the impact and role of media (UNESCO, OHCHR, the International Council on Human Rights Policy and the International Federation of Journalists).

Follow-up to the World Conference

8. In her message marking the International Day for Tolerance (16 November 2001), the High Commissioner noted that the World Conference had been a watershed in battling intolerance because it had confronted difficult issues of the past and present. It had given human rights defenders and representatives of marginalized and excluded groups a platform for voicing their concerns and linking with others facing similar struggles. She further noted that the World Conference had resulted in a detailed document to guide future actions against discrimination and intolerance.

9. The Anti-Discrimination Unit in OHCHR to follow up on the recommendations of the World Conference became operational from December 2001. The Unit will, inter alia, initiate and support selected awareness-building projects with national institutions, youth and women's groups, and other interested entities on specific themes and topics relating to the Durban Programme of Action, and produce and disseminate special reports and publications on the follow-up process.

United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education (1995-2004)

10. OHCHR was given a dual role for overall coordination of the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education and for directly implementing some of the activities outlined in the Plan of Action.[1] The reports of the High Commissioner to the General Assembly at its fifty-sixth session (A/56/271) and to the Commission on Human Rights at its present session (E/CN.4/2002/104) on the Decade contain detailed information of the Office's contribution to the Decade's objectives. Brief highlights are provided below:

(a) OHCHR ensures basic worldwide coordination of the Decade by disseminating information on the Decade and on human rights education in general. A specific page on the OHCHR web site concerning the Decade is periodically updated in order to disseminate relevant information;

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[1] In 2000, the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education entered its sixth year. In accordance with the Plan of Action for the Decade, and pursuant to General Assembly resolution 54/161, OHCHR undertook a mid-term global evaluation of progress made during the first five years of the Decade. Details of the evaluation can be found in document A/55/360.

(b) The Office facilitates networking and information sharing amongst Decade actors. In the reporting period, this entailed (i) the launch on Human Rights Day 2000 of the OHCHR database and resource collection on human rights education; (ii) the organizing of the Subregional Workshop on Human Rights Education in Central Africa (March 2001), the first activity of the Subregional Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Central Africa, which agreed on a priority programme for the Subregional Centre focusing on human rights education and public information activities, and the Regional Conference on Human Rights Education in Latin America and the Caribbean (Mexico City, November-December 2001); and (iii) producing a compendium of national plans of action for human rights education to assist States to develop their own human rights education action plans. Further, the Office has substantively participated in, and in some cases financially supported educational and training initiatives by various institutions and organizations at the international and regional levels;

(c) The Office assists grass-roots human rights education initiatives, particularly by administering the Assisting Communities Together (ACT) project. The project makes small grants available to individuals and NGOs that carry out human rights activities at the grass-roots level. It is an initiative of OHCHR, implemented together with the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations Office for Project Services. The second phase of the project was launched in November 1999 and was expected to finish at the end of 2001. During this phase, 97 projects were implemented in 16 developing countries or countries in transition. The majority of the funded activities concentrated on education for human rights;

(d) The Office disseminates the Universal Declaration of Human Rights around the world. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights database on the OHCHR web site contains 324 language versions of the Universal Declaration and OHCHR has continued to facilitate translations into indigenous and minority languages.

International Decade of the World's Indigenous People (1994-2003)

11. The report of the High Commissioner to the General Assembly at its fifty-sixth session (A/56/206) on the International Decade contains information on the Office's contribution to the Decade's objectives. Relevant activities are highlighted below:

(a) OHCHR, in cooperation with the Department of Public Information, organized a Workshop on Indigenous Media in New York (11-14 December 2000), in recognition of the fact that the media are an important tool in promoting indigenous identity, language and culture, and that positive messages increase positive perceptions of indigenous peoples and their communities. The report of the workshop is contained in document E/CN.4/Sub.2/AC.4/2001/3;

(b) OHCHR organized a Workshop on Multiculturalism in Africa (Kidal, Mali, 8-13 January 2001) in cooperation with the Agency for Cooperation and Research in Development, the Chairpersons of the United Nations Working Groups on Minorities and Indigenous Populations, and UNDP Bamako. The report of the workshop is contained in document E/CN.4/Sub.2/AC.5/2001/3. A substantial amount of preparation has been done for a follow-up workshop which will be held in Botswana from 18 to 22 February 2002;

(c) Since 1997, OHCHR has sponsored an Indigenous Fellowship Programme. In 2001, indigenous fellows from Australia, Botswana, Ecuador, Namibia and Thailand spent five months at OHCHR. During a briefing on 2 November 2001, the fellows introduced their communities, cultures and concerns to OHCHR staff and interns. This very positive briefing reaffirmed the beauty of diversity and contributed to a wider understanding of the imperative to protect indigenous peoples and their communities.

Twentieth anniversary of the Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief

12. The year 2001 marks the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of the Declaration. The report of the Special Rapporteur on religious intolerance to the General Assembly at its fifty-sixth session (A/56/253) provides a comprehensive review of the mandate since its creation in 1986.

13. Pursuant to Commission resolution 1994/18, the Special Rapporteur undertook a survey on problems relating to freedom of religion or belief as seen in the curricula and textbooks of primary or elementary and secondary educational institutions. Using as a basis an analysis of the responses of 77 States, the Special Rapporteur, in cooperation with the Government of Spain, organized an International Consultative Conference on School Education in relation with Freedom of Religion or Belief, Tolerance and Non-discrimination in Madrid from 23 to 25 November 2001. The last day of the Madrid Conference coincided with the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of the Declaration. On that day, the final document was adopted by consensus. The text is contained in an annex to the report of the Special Rapporteur to the present session of the Commission (E/CN.4/2002/73) and will also be communicated to the General Assembly.

14. In preparation for the Madrid Conference, OHCHR prepared a background paper relating to the main themes. The Office facilitated the participation of members of relevant treaty bodies, special rapporteurs and members of the Working Group on Minorities. The High Commissioner also supported the Special Rapporteur's initiative and participated in the opening of the Madrid Conference.

Other activities

15. In accordance with Commission resolution 2000/66, OHCHR, in coordination with the Bureau of the fifty-sixth session of the Commission, organized an intergovernmental forum on the contribution of human rights to the further development of a culture of peace. To that end, an Expert Seminar on Human Rights and Peace was held on 8 and 9 December which produced a note that served as the basis for the intergovernmental forum, held during the celebration of Human Rights Day 2000 with the theme "Human rights education: a contribution to a Culture of Peace". One significant conclusion was that changing the attitudes and values which give rise to a culture where violence prevails is a difficult task and can only be achieved through education at all levels. The report of the Expert Seminar and intergovernmental forum was submitted to the Commission at its fifty-seventh session (E/CN.4/2001/120).

16. OHCHR continued to provide support to the human rights treaty bodies. In their examination of States parties' reports and in their dialogues with States parties, the committees emphasize that non-discrimination, as a fundamental principle of international human rights law, is essential in combating intolerance and promoting respect for human rights. OHCHR also supported the special procedures of the Commission in their examination, monitoring and reporting on human rights situations in specific countries or on thematic issues, practically all of which deal, in one way or another, with issues relating to intolerance. OHCHR continues its programme of advisory services and technical assistance to strengthen national capacities in the field of human rights, including public information activities. Details of activities at the national, regional and global levels are provided in the relevant reports of the Secretary-General to the Commission on Human Rights.